

President Signs Michaud's Veteran Caregiver Program into Law

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WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Michaud joined President Obama, veterans, caregivers, and other members of Congress at the White House for the signing of the "Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act" (S. 1963) into law. S. 1963 includes a bill Michaud authored creating a new program to help caregivers of veterans. Photos of the event today and from an April 21st Capitol Hill briefing Michaud sponsored on the bill are attached. They feature Sarah and Ted Wade, who President Obama highlighted in his remarks today.

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"Family and friends of wounded veterans often put their own lives on hold to care for their loved one," said Michaud, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health. "These caregivers step up each and everyday to care for veterans that sacrificed everything to defend our country. This new law finally establishes a coordinated program that will support their efforts and offer them some relief."

During his remarks, President Obama thanked Michaud for his work on the bill. He also highlighted the story of a caregiver named Sarah Wade. For the last six years Sarah has acted as her husband's primary caregiver and case manager. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, her husband, Army Sergeant Ted Wade, was called to serve first in Afghanistan and later Iraq. On February 14, 2004, his humvee was hit by an improvised explosive device (IED) on a mission in Al Mahmudiyah. Ted sustained a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI), suffered from a transhumeral amputation, multiple bone fractures, soft tissue shrapnel injuries, and complications due to acute anemia, hyperglycemia, and infections. Though SGT Wade remained in a coma for over two months and withdrawal of life support was discussed, he made a miraculous recovery.

SGT Wade was one of the first major explosive blast polytrauma cases from Operation Iraqi Freedom treated by the Department of Defense or Veteran Affairs. Sarah suspended her studies in 2004 to serve as an advocate and caregiver for her husband since access to appropriate care sometimes required intervention from the highest levels of government or changes to federal law. She has moved around extensively with her husband, who has been treated at a dozen medical facilities since his evacuation to Germany.

"Sarah's story is just one example of what goes on everyday in our country," said Michaud. "But it shouldn't be this way. That's why I have worked so hard to establish this caregiver assistance program at the VA."

The caregiver program authored by Michaud would help people like Sarah Wade and her husband. It would provide support services to family and other caregivers of veterans, including:

- education sessions for improved care giving
- counseling and mental health services
- respite care for family and other caregivers of all veterans
- health care and a stipend for caregivers living with severely wounded veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan

The broader bill that contains Michaud's caregiver bill, the "Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act" (S.1963), also takes a number of other important steps to help our nation's veterans, including:

- Enhancing health services for the 1.8 million women veterans, including care for newborns for the 1st time in history;
- Expanding mental health services for veterans and health care access for veterans in rural areas;
- Prohibiting copayments for veterans who are catastrophically disabled

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